

MAMMALS OF GOOSEBERRY HILL

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Since 1983, a record was made of the numbers and locations of any mammals encountered on Gooseberry Hill. In addition, observations made at the Lab and at Marion Way are included here, as are those made by Dom Serventy at the Knoll.

Echidna Tachyglossus aculeatus

Only two records of echidnas were made between 1984 and 1998, both of large specimens. However fresh diggings were seen occasionally, in particular along the main gully system.

Chuditch Dasyurus geoffroi

The only recent record of a Chuditch was made by Dom Serventy in December 1970.

Southern Brown Bandicoot Isoodon obesulus

Seen occasionally on Gooseberry Hill, at Marion Way and at the Lab. Most (10 of 14) road kills observed were between February and May. Single animals were regularly seen foraging during the day in leaf litter under wisterias and acacias at the Lab from February 1994 to January 1995, and in March and April of 1997. On 24 April 1994, two Black Rats *Rattus rattus* were present in the same area and chased the Bandicoot.

Brushtail Possum Trichosurus vulpecula

Not seen on Gooseberry Hill, but present throughout the year at Marion

Way. Most animals could be individually identified by their colour (grey, brown, dark brown) and the presence and amount of white on the tail. A maximum of three was seen at the one time. In 11 years from 1988, breeding (juvenile on the back) was recorded 6 times (April and September 1988, August 1989, May 1990, October 1991, August 1993). There were five records of road-kills, four of them on Gooseberry Hill Road.

Black-gloved Wallaby Macropus irma

Serventy stated that Black-gloved Wallabies were "often seen" during his period of observation (1957-1974). For the period 1983 - 1998, there was only one possible sighting, in December 1984. They were recorded in heathland habitat on the Scarp at Lesmurdie (c. 10 km south of Gooseberry Hill) in May 1984 by Dell and How (1988). According to P. Christensen (in Strahan 1983) there was a major decline in Black-gloved Wallabies in Western Australia in 1973 and 1974. Serventy also stated that they eat the rinds of *Zamia* seeds *Macrozamia riedlei*. We have found chewed *Zamia* seeds in some years after fire, but this was not attributable to Black-gloved Wallabies.

Western Grey Kangaroo Macropus fuliginosus

Whenever Grey Kangaroos were encountered on Gooseberry Hill, their location and group size were recorded, and in most instances also the status

(size, age, breeding) of group members.

Grey Kangaroos were found throughout Gooseberry Hill in all months of the year. The median group size was two and the maximum 14, recorded in December 1996 (Figure 61). At least 16 different animals were seen on the 120 ha study area during the course of one day (3 October 1996).

The numbers of Grey Kangaroos seen between 1985 and 1998 are shown in Table 7. During the last four years in particular there was an increase in numbers and the size of groups. This latter period (1995 - 1998) was the only time that I have been bitten by ticks while walking through the area. There seems to be no obvious explanation (such as rainfall or fire) for the increase in Grey Kangaroo numbers. The security of the area changed when locked gates were erected in 1988. However there was no sign of hunting activities either before or after 1988 and all dead animals found were road kills.

Some blind animals were seen in November and December 1984 prior to



Figure 61. Size of groups of Western Grey Kangaroos seen on Gooseberry Hill.

the start of the "observation period". On three occasions, kangaroos were chased by dogs.

Females with large pouch young were observed from August to January with peak sightings in October and November (70%, n = 44). Females with young at foot were seen mostly in December. Copulation was recorded in September, October and November.

Some kangaroos drank from horse troughs when the Helena River dried up in late summer. They selectively grazed species of *Lomandra* and *Haemodorum*, especially after fire.

Table 7. Numbers of Western Grey Kangaroos seen on Gooseberry Hill between 1985 and 1998.

| Year | Number seen | | | | total | Group size =>4 (as % of total) |
|------|-------------|--------|-------------------|----------|-------|-----------------------------------|
| | large | medium | size not recorded | juvenile | | |
| 1985 | 10 | 3 | 19 | 1 | 33 | 3.8 |
| 1986 | 14 | 18 | 10 | 7 | 49 | 0 |
| 1987 | 19 | 34 | 17 | 24 | 94 | 8.0 |
| 1988 | 24 | 34 | 12 | 7 | 77 | 12.8 |
| 1989 | 25 | 30 | 13 | 14 | 82 | 6.5 |
| 1990 | 12 | 29 | 9 | 3 | 53 | 0 |
| 1991 | 12 | 20 | 9 | 4 | 45 | 0 |
| 1992 | 27 | 37 | 15 | 2 | 81 | 6.7 |
| 1993 | 28 | 31 | 20 | 4 | 83 | 2.0 |
| 1994 | 43 | 27 | 13 | 2 | 85 | 9.1 |
| 1995 | 34 | 82 | 32 | 14 | 162 | 15.5 |
| 1996 | 28 | 48 | 41 | 25 | 142 | 22.0 |
| 1997 | 28 | 115 | 6 | 11 | 160 | 13.7 |
| 1998 | 26 | 103 | 7 | 10 | 146 | 15.9 |

House Mouse *Mus musculus*

Several mice were trapped in invertebrate pitfall traps in May, June and October 1986 and June 1987 (Joe Leone, pers. comm.)

Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*

Rabbits were numerous in all habitats on Gooseberry Hill. There were no obvious year to year variations in numbers, although fewest were recorded in 1992, the wettest year recorded during the observation period.

Kittens were usually recorded from November to January. Several black colour variants were seen and myxomatosis-infected individuals were found in November 1988.

Fox *Vulpes vulpes*

Foxes were recorded on Gooseberry Hill on 24 occasions over 15 years with few (2) seen between April and June. Calls were heard in July (4 times) and March (once). Small pups were seen in November; half-grown juveniles in January. Two hungry-looking

individuals were seen walking slowly down Marion Way in July 1990.

Cat *Felis catus*

There were 30 sightings of cats on Gooseberry Hill of at least 24 different individuals (based on the colour and pattern of their coat). Ten were within 100 m of houses; one was fitted with a collar; and two sightings were of a brown and white long-haired animal. Half of the animals seen were either black or black with some white markings. Most sightings were made between August and December (73%).

REFERENCES

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- STRAHAN, R. 1983. editor. *The Mammals of Australia*. Angus & Robertson, Sydney.